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AUTHOR Pomerantz, Anne
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ABSTRACT

This article examines how participants in an interview use different linguistic and social resources in order to construct multiple, complex self-representations. It discusses interviews from a critical discourse perspective. In particular, it suggests that interviews are sites of struggle where individuals strive to construct representations of themselves, where they choose among possibilities for stating a particular idea and align themselves with both certain ways of understanding the social world and the people who have historically understood the social world from that perspective. They identify themselves with certain subject positions, the notion of which is thought to capture the idea of social identity. Research questions include the following: what social and linguistic resources are available; how do interviewers delimit the ways in which these resources are used; how do specific instances of resource use function as acts of self-representation. While acknowledging there are some constraints imposed on individual knowledge and other circumstances, this article illustrates how individuals manage to construct multiple, complex, and dynamic representations of themselves within the confines of a highly ritualized form of talk. Fifteen references are included. (Author/KFT)

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Interviews and Identity: A Critical Discourse Perspective

Anne Pomerantz

University of Pennsylvania

This paper discusses interviews from a critical discourse perspective. In particular, it suggests that interviews are sites of struggle where individuals strive to construct representations of themselves. As individuals choose among the possibilities for stating a particular idea, they are aligning themselves with both certain ways of understanding the social world and the people who have historically understood the social world from that perspective. That is, they are identifying themselves with certain subject positions. In critical discourse research, subject positions refer to the possibilities for social identity that are available at particular times and places. The notion of subject positions is thought to capture the idea of social identity as multiple, complex, dynamic, locally situated, and open to negotiation. The present study examines how individuals utilize a variety of linguistic and social resources in order to move among different subject positions over the course of an interview encounter for the purposes of self representation. It asks: (1) what social and linguistic resources are available for and constitutive of interviews, (2) how do interviews delimit the ways in which these resources are used, and (3) how do specific instances of resource use function as acts of self representation? While noting that freedom to manipulate linguistic and social resources is constrained by both knowledge of interviews and individual circumstances, this paper illustrates how individuals manage to construct multiple, complex and dynamic representations of themselves within the confines of a highly ritualized form of talk.

Introduction

In this paper I examine interviews from a critical discourse perspective. In particular, I argue that interviews are not just ritualized speech events where one individual elicits information from another. They are also sites of struggle where individuals strive to construct representations of themselves. The present study looks closely at the relationship between language use and social identity within the context of interviews. That is, it examines how individuals utilize a variety of linguistic

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and social resources over the course of an interview encounter to create a publically recognizable self. By linguistic and social resources I am referring to both the elements of language (sound patterns, word meanings, syntactic structures, etc.) and the rules for language use (turn taking patterns, conversational conventions, inferencing, etc.) available for the realization of face-to-face interaction. As individuals choose among the possibilities for stating a particular idea, they are aligning themselves with both certain ways of understanding the social world and the people who have historically understood the social world from that perspective. That is, they are identifying themselves with certain subject positions. In critical discourse research, subject positions refer to the possibilities for social identity that are available at particular times and places. The notion of subject positions is thought to capture the idea of social identity as multiple, complex, dynamic, locally situated, and open to negotiation.

Participants, Data Collection, Methods

The data presented in this study come from a series of interviews I conducted for a project on the experiences of individuals studying a heritage language at the university level. My original study asked whether formal language instruction affected a heritage speaker's attitudes toward that language. The participants in the study included both graduate and undergraduate students of Latino heritage studying Spanish at two universities in a large Northeastern city in the United States. As an instructor of Spanish at one of the universities where interviews took place, I asked my colleagues for assistance in recruiting participants for a study on heritage language learners. Over the course of two months, I was able to conduct a total of eight interviews. Although I contacted more than 15 students, only eight were available to speak with me about the project during the period of data collection. Each interview took place in my campus office and lasted approximately 20 to 40 minutes. A small tape-recorder, in full view of the participants, was used to record the interviews. Of the eight interviews conducted, excerpts from three are presented in this paper.

Rationale and Research Questions

Motivated by discussions in the literature as to the reliability/validity of interviews as a research method (Wolfson 1976; Briggs 1986; Milroy 1987), I decided to look closely at the characteristics of the data I had collected. In particular, I was struck by what Halliday (1985) termed the "ideational" and "interpersonal" metafunctions of language. Halliday observed that all instances of language use simultaneously communicate two types of meaning: information about content (ideational meaning) and information about social relationships (interpersonal meaning). In examining my data, I noted

that individuals were not merely describing their experiences as heritage language learners. They were also constructing multiple, complex, and dynamic representations of themselves within the confines of an interview setting. Indeed, I realized that this identity work merited further investigation as interviews are not just a neutral tool for gathering data. The study presented here asks: (1) what social and linguistic resources are available for and constitutive of interviews, (2) how do interviews delimit the ways in which these resources are used, and (3) how do specific instances of resource use function as acts of self representation? In short, I suggest that the study of interviews from a critical discourse perspective allows for the investigation of how individuals manage to construct multiple, complex and dynamic representations of themselves within the confines of a highly ritualized form of talk.

Approach

Critical discourse analysis, like other discourse-based approaches, advocates a view of language as social practice. Specifically, it offers a framework for understanding the relationship between language use and social identity. In critical discourse research, discourses refer to "the complexes of signs and practices that organize social existence and social reproduction" (Norton 1997: 207). They both "delimit the range of possible practices under their authority" and "organize how these practices are realized in time and space" (Norton 1997: 209). Yet, discourses also offer different places from which to make sense of the social world or different 'subject positions.' As Gee (1996: 91) has argued, a given language makes possible many ways of saying the same thing. These ways of speaking, however, differ with respect to their associations with subject positions. As individuals choose among the possibilities for stating a particular idea, they are aligning themselves with both certain ways of understanding the social world and the people who have historically understood the social world from that perspective. That is, they are identifying themselves with certain subject positions.

In critical discourse research, "subject positions" refer to the possibilities for self-hood or socially recognizable ways of being that exist within a discourse. This notion is thought to capture not only the idea of social identity as multiple and complex, but also the idea of social identity as constructed within and through language. Drawing on the work of Bakhtin, some critical discourse analysts (Walsh 1991, Wertsch 1991, Ivanic 1998) have argued that each subject position is characterized by a certain socially recognizable style of language use or "voice." As individuals choose among the linguistic and social resources available for and constitutive of certain discourses, they speak through these different voices or "ventriloquate." The act of ventriloquation allows individuals to take up and manipulate different voices for the purposes of self presentation within the context of a

particular interaction. This approach implies that social identity is not a fixed attribute of the self, but rather an ongoing production. A critical discourse perspective suggests that all instances of language use align speakers with ideologically saturated and historically situated subject positions and hence function as acts of identity. What makes this perspective critical, is a belief that not all subject positions are invested with the same amount of power and authority. As individuals move among these subject positions they either reproduce or challenge the ways of organizing meaning embodied in different discourses.

Ivanic (1998) has argued that the distinction between "genre" and "discourse" may help to explain how individuals are able to do such intricate identity work within the context of highly ritualized forms of talk. Genres, she writes, are "shaped by institutionally defined purposes, roles and the social relationships associated with them," while discourses are shaped by "subject matters and ideologies" (Ivanic 1998: 46). Consequently, interviews belong to the category genre while subject positions belong to the category discourse. A critical discourse approach assumes that as individuals participate in an interview, they must choose among the linguistic and social resources available for and constitutive of the interview talk. That is, they must decide what an interview entails and how to go about accomplishing this goal. Moreover, individuals must be aware of the limitations interviews place on their rights to use certain resources. Yet, as individuals participate in an interview, they also draw on their knowledge of discourses to position themselves as having certain beliefs, values, and perspectives. They take up and manipulate different voices in order to construct multiple, complex, dynamic, historically situated, and ideologically saturated self representations.

Review of the Literature

As interviews have long been considered a means for data collection, there exists a wealth of information on the practical aspects of research interviewing. This literature addresses such issues as formulating questions, establishing trust, and scoring responses (see Briggs 1996 for review). Despite this focus on "practical concerns," a review of the sociolinguistic literature on interviews, and more generally face-to-face interaction, suggests that participants draw on a wide range of linguistic and social resources for the enactment of speech genres. In this paper, I discuss five of these resources and illustrate how they are used for identity construction within the context of an interview. Briefly, these resources are: participant roles (Milroy 1987; Wolfson 1976), conversational maxims (Molenaar & Smit 1996; Grice 1975), contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982), footing (Goffman 1981), and personal pronouns (Davies and Harré 1990).

Wolfson (1976) was among the first sociolinguists to examine the interview as a distinct form of speech with its own rules of speaking. She found

that individuals readily identify the "question/answer pattern" as characteristic of interview talk. Furthermore, she observed that "native speakers of English are quite aware of the rule which gives one of the participants in the interview event the unilateral right to ask questions and the other(s) the obligation to answer them" (Wolfson 1976: 190). In keeping with this perspective, Milroy (1987) noted that interviews are culturally recognizable and highly stylized speech genres in which power and authority are distributed unevenly between participants. In an interview, two individuals (generally strangers) engage in an extended question/answer sequence intended to elicit information on a particular matter. Yet, the roles these individuals occupy with respect to one another differ greatly in terms of the rights and obligations associated with each. The interviewer has the right to select topics and formulate questions. The interviewee must address the interviewer's topics and answer his/her questions.

With respect to this interactional approach to the study of interviews , Molenaar and Smit (1996) examined how Grice's (1975) conversational maxims influence what can and cannot be said during an interview. They noted that "normal" conversational strategies impose "practical limits" on how interviewers and interviewees relate to one another over the course of an interaction (Molenaar & Smit 1996: 134). Furthermore, they argued that Grice's (1975) philosophical work on the structure of face-to-face interaction offers a way to understand how individuals make sense of each other's utterances. Grice claimed that speakers of a language share a common code for the interpretation of speech behavior. He argued that this code could be described in terms of a set of four conversational maxims, referred to collectively as "The Cooperative Principle." Briefly, his code states,

Grice's Cooperative Principle

> *Quantity:* Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). Do not make you contribution more informative than is required.
>
> *Quality:* Be truthful. Do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
>
> *Relation:* Be relevant.
>
> *Manner:* Be brief and orderly. Avoid obscurity and ambiguity (Grice 1975 as cited in Wolfson 1989: 58).

Grice's principle, when applied to the study of interviews, suggests interviewers and interviewees rely on their knowledge of conversations in order to manage their interactions.

In keeping with this focus on conversational knowledge, Gumperz's (1982) work on contextualization cues offers a means for investigating the

ways in which individuals signal how the use of a particular utterance/gesture should be taken. For Gumperz, contextualization cues refer to the "constellations of surface features of message forms" by which "speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, how semantic content is to be understood, and how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows (Gumperz 1982: 131). As Gumperz noted, contextualization cues (which can take a myriad of verbal and nonverbal surface forms) function below the level of conscious awareness to relate what is said/done to what is meant by a particular utterance/gesture. These cues allow participants to form contextual presuppositions about both the kind of speech genre in which they are engaged and the illocutionary force intended by a particular utterance. Hence, individuals rely not only on the knowledge of conversations generally, but also on the specifics of single interactional moves to understand face-to-face encounters.

Building on this notion of interaction as an ongoing production, both Goffman's concept of footing (1981) and Davies and Harré's work on positioning (1990) emphasize how individuals in conversation continually reposition themselves with respect to one another over the course of an encounter. Goffman defined footing as "the alignments we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (Goffman 1981: 128). He used this concept to describe how the freedom to move among subject positions is constrained not only by one's role in a particular interaction, but also by one's other social roles and relationships. Davies and Harré observed that pronouns are often used by conversants to indicate how they see themselves with respect to others. These authors distinguished between two kinds of positioning, interactive and reflexive. In interactive positioning, "what one person says positions another," while in reflexive positioning what one says positions oneself (Davies and Harré 1990: 48). For Davies and Harré, pronouns are the linguistic manifestation of footing as they represent the process of conversation as a cooperative endeavor.

Data Analysis and Discussion

This first example considers the notion of participant roles within the context of an interview. Following Milroy (1987), I argue that the distribution of rights and obligations which characterize the roles interviewer/interviewee must be upheld in order for a given interaction to count as an interview. In this selection, I (the interviewer) ask Isaac (the interviewee) about where his parents were raised.

Example 1

1	Anne:	are your parents from the same neighborhood in Brooklyn
2	Isaac:	uhhh pretty much yeah
3	Anne:	pretty much

4		what neighborhood are you from
5	Isaac:	(pause...) I don't know the name of it (laugh)
6	Anne:	(laugh) just a curiosity question
7		my dad's from Brooklyn too

In line 4, I make a direct request for information by asking the interviewee to name the section of Brooklyn in which his parents were raised. The interviewee, however, cannot supply an answer and there is a slight breakdown in communication. Not only does the interviewee pause (line 5) before he admits to not knowing the name of the neighborhood, he also emits a laugh upon not being able to comply with my request. Indeed, one could argue that both the pause and the laugh signal the interviewee's awareness that a question must be followed by an answer in this kind of speech event. That is, the interviewee is knowledgeable about the rules of speaking which govern question/answer adjacency pairs in interviews, yet he doesn't have access to the kind of information which would allow him to comply with the rules. In lines 6-7, I offer some rational for my question "just a curiosity question/ my dad's from Brooklyn too" (lines 6-7) and this seems to release the interviewee from his obligation. In the context of an unrealized question/answer sequence, my statement of explanation seems to function as a repair mechanism. Rather than pressing the interviewee for an answer, I seem to mitigate the importance of my question with the word "just" and then provide a personal reason for making such a request. This move allows the interview to proceed without disturbing the distribution of participation rights and obligations. Had the interviewee asked why I would need/want to know this information about his parents' neighborhood, the interview structure might have broken down. As this excerpt illustrates, both individuals must remain aware of their rights and obligations as participants in an interview event and work together to uphold the characteristics of their roles in order for a given exchange to count as an interview.

The roles of interviewer and interviewee, while highly restricted in terms of participation rights and obligations, nonetheless make possible a number of subject positions from which an individual may speak. For example, the previous excerpt showed how one interviewee was able to present himself as both knowledgeable with respect to the cultural conventions which guide research interviews and unknowledgeable with respect to the topic at hand. The roles of interviewer and interviewee do not determine what an individual can say during an interview encounter. Instead, they serve as points of reference around which individuals can take on different voices in order to construct representations of themselves.

The next example illustrates how individuals rely not only on the roles available in a particular speech event, but also on their knowledge of how conversations should be conducted in order to present themselves as certain kinds of people. The following excerpt illustrates how Grice's Coop-

erative Principle functions as resource for the construction of social identity. In this selection, I have just explained to the interviewee (Raúl) that I am doing a project on individuals studying a heritage language at the university level. We now begin to talk about Raúl's childhood.

Example 2

1	Anne:	Tell me a little bit about yourself. Where were you born
2		etcetera
3	Raul:	OK. I was born in uh Voorhese New Jersey
4	Anne:	mm hm
5	Raul:	South Jersey here uh in the Delaware Valley and uh I was raised
6		in Washington Township New Jersey uh in Glouster
7		County and I uh attended uh Wedgewood elementary
8		school and then uh in middle school I was Washington
9		Township Middle School and then Washington Township
10		High School and uh I what else I mean those are the only
11		things I can um
12	Anne:	Well yeah no that's great um what was I going to say
13	Raúl:	I guess grow growing up I uh I I mean re relative you know
14		to the ah to the question I mean I I grew up speaking both
15		languages

In line 1, I make a direct request "tell me a little bit about yourself" and then modify this request with a specific question "where were you born et cetera." In keeping with the maxim of relation, the interviewee responds by naming his place of birth. Moreover, he takes up my more general request by giving his educational history. While one could argue that the interviewee's emphasis on geographic detail would violate the maxim of quantity, Raúl's desire to comply with my request for personal information seems to account for this attention to detail. Indeed, in lines 10-11, Raúl implies that he is aware of the maxim of quantity "I mean those are the only things I can um." Raúl seems to feel an obligation to fulfill my request with a statement that includes just the right amount of information. That is, he draws attention to the maxim of quantity in order to present himself as a cooperative, knowledgeable interviewee. Moreover, Raúl's comments in lines 13-15 suggest that he conceives of the interview as an information seeking event. Rather than waiting for a question about language use, Raúl addresses the issue of his linguistic history right from the start, "I grew up speaking both languages" (lines 14-15). According to Grice, Raúl's reference to language could be explained as an attempt to adhere to the maxim of relation as he actively tries to make his comments related to the overall theme of the interview. In fact, in line 13, Raúl himself uses the word "relevant" to introduce his remarks on language use. Here, one could argue that Raúl is presenting himself as not only cooperative but also an individual who meets the criteria of my study. By emphasizing the maxim of relation he presents himself as both a heritage language learner and one who speaks from that subject position.

With respect to the study of subject positions, Gumperz's work on contextualization cues (1982) highlights the choices speakers make among similar ways of saying something. They point to the ways in which, for example, speakers select one lexical item over another to provide a continual index of who they are and what they are doing with respect to both the speech genre and one another over the course of an interaction. In the following excerpt, Isaac and I are discussing his experiences as a student of Spanish. At this point I have asked Isaac whether or not his professors at the university had been native speakers of Spanish.

Example 3

1	Isaac:	then for [Spanish] 130
2		he was he was Hispanic so I'm going to assume he was a
3		native speaker

In this example, Isaac uses the verb 'assume' to problematize the relationship between being Hispanic and speaking Spanish. As a Puerto Rican who does not speak Spanish fluently, Isaac seems to realize the risk of making assumptions about people's linguistic abilities with respect to their ethnic identities. In fact, other excerpts from this interview suggest that Isaac has struggled with issues of language and ethnic identity as a heritage language speaker (for example, Isaac says of his decision to study Spanish at the university, "I um I guess uh once I got here it became more of a I felt more of an obligation since I'm um um Hispanic that I should speak Spanish). In line 2 Isaac uses the verb "assume" to cast doubt on the connection he is about to draw between his professor's ethnic identity and his professor's native language. With respect to Grice's Cooperative Principle, one could argue that the word "assume" indicates that Isaac's adherence to the maxim of quality. He chooses a verb that connotes the subjectivity of his remarks in making this assertion. Yet, this lexical choice also seems to function as a contextualization cue. By using a verb of mental perception, Isaac positions himself as one who sees connections between language and ethnicity from a critical perspective. Indeed, the structure of line 2 shows how the phrase "so I'm going to assume" functions as a red flag in terms of relating the beginning of the line "he was Hispanic" to the end of the line "he was a native speaker". While line 2 is syntactically balanced (it begins and ends with phrases that take the form of "NP + to be + NP"); nonetheless, these two phrases are not joined together unproblematically. The phrase "so I'm going to assume" allows Isaac to emphasize the subject position from which he speaks. That is, Isaac speaks through the voice of one who struggles with questions of language and ethnic identity. While Isaac recognizes that a connection may exist between language proficiency and ethnic identity, he realizes that this is not always the case. Consequently, he seems to use the verb "assume" to draw attention to the subjectivity of his claim.

Despite individuals' abilities to use linguistic and social resources for the purpose of self representation, they cannot always choose freely among subject positions. The next example draws on the notion of footing (Goffman 1981) to illustrate how Isaac positions himself relative to me during the interview. In reading this example, one should note that I had been Isaac's teacher for intermediate Spanish (Spanish 140) in the spring of 1997. Here, as in example 3, I have asked Isaac to comment on the native language of his Spanish teachers at the university and he must now include me in his account.

Example 4

1	Isaac:	then for [Spanish] 130
2		he was he was Hispanic so I'm going to assume he was a
3		native speaker and um then I'm not sure if you
4	Anne:	I'm not a native speaker
5	Isaac:	oh ok

In line 3 Isaac hedges and says, "and um then I'm not sure if you." Here, I immediately tell Isaac that I am not, in fact, a native speaker of the language and this seems to signal a change in footing. Not only does Isaac break the interview frame by evoking our prior relationship as teacher/student (as opposed to the present one of interviewer/interviewee), he also (as interviewee) asks me (the interviewer) a personal question. While one could argue that this shift in rights and obligations might indicate that we are no longer participating in a traditional interview event, Goffman's notion of footing allows for a more flexible interpretation. Although Isaac and I briefly exchange roles, the interactional economy remains static. Isaac now has the right to ask questions and I have the obligation to supply answers. Each of us seems to have traded one set of rights and obligations for another. We are still operating within the context of an interview frame, yet our roles relative to one another have changed.

Isaac's lack of knowledge as to whether I am a native speaker of Spanish also restricts the subject positions from which he can speak at this moment. Given that I know the answer to this question and Isaac is unsure, he cannot speak from the position of a cooperative, knowledgeable interviewee. Indeed, one could argue that in a traditional research interview, interviewers rarely ask questions to which they already know the answers. That is, interviews are activities in which the goal is to seek information, not to check information. Thus, interviewees have the right to speak from the position of "expert provider of information." In example 4, however, this is not the case. Consequently, Isaac and I change roles relative to one another as the relationship teacher/student becomes more salient than the relationship interviewer/interviewee. Now I have the right to speak from the position of "expert provider of knowledge" and Isaac has the right to ask questions. By shifting roles, we have gained access to new possibilities for subject positions.

Indeed, this emphasis on multiple, complex, and dynamic subject positions can be further examined in terms of the use of personal pronouns. In the following excerpt, I have asked Jessica to comment on what it is like to be the only person of Latino origin in a Spanish language class. Here, one could argue that the use of both interactive and reflexive positioning strategies seems to reveal the existence of two frames: the interview and the narrative. Each frame makes possible several different and simultaneously occurring subject positions.

Example 5

1	Anne:	um going back to being in class do you think being Hispanic
2		in Spanish class um is different from not being Hispanic
3		in Spanish class do you think that plays any role
4	Jessica:	yeah I think that they believe that we're supposed to be able
5		to it comes naturally to us
6	Anne:	um hm
7	Jessica:	you know even though I grew up in Ameri you know here
8	Anne:	yeah
9	Jessica:	in Philadelphia and speaking primarily English they think
10		that oh you're Hispanic background you can say with no
11		problem and it's just not like that

Consistent with our relationship as participants in a formal interview setting, I ask Jessica a question in lines 1-3. The repetition of the pronoun "you" in this question seems to suggest that I am attempting to solicit her opinion. That is, I want Jessica to answer the question in terms of her experiences as a heritage language learner. In lines 4-5 Jessica's use of pronouns draws attention to the multiple subject positions from which she speaks. Here, Jessica "the story teller" embarks on a short narrative to answer my question. She begins by positioning the different characters participating in her story relative to one another. Specifically, she mentions three groups: I (Jessica), we (Jessica + other students of Hispanic origin), and they (students/teachers not of Hispanic origin). In this story, reflexive positioning serves to illustrate how Jessica sees herself with respect to these other characters. For example, the pronoun "we" suggests that Jessica considers herself part of the group "Hispanic students" while the pronoun "they" serves to create an opposition between Hispanic and non-Hispanic members of a Spanish language classroom. Yet, Jessica's pronoun use is not confined to this internal narrative mode. She too remains conscious of her positions as narrator and interviewee. In line 7 she repeats the phrase "you know" twice and this seems to indicate her awareness of my presence. Jessica's story is told with respect to a specific audience and she seems to take my responses in lines 6 and 8 as signs of my participation in her story line. Indeed, one could argue that the use of the pronoun "you" in this context allows Jessica to position me as a ratified participant in her narrative and a interviewer seeking information about her experiences as a heritage language learner. Thus, the use of pronouns draws attention to the subject positions made possible by several simultaneously occurring relationships:

interviewer/interviewee, story-teller/audience and story-teller/characters in story.

Conclusions

This paper has shown how individuals use various social and linguistic resources to construct representations of themselves over the course of an interview encounter. Taking a critical discourse perspective, I began by explaining how the relationship of interviewer to interviewee is both constituted by and constitutive of interview discourse. That is, the rules of speaking which govern interviews make possible the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee makes possible the notion of interviews as a distinct form of discourse. Next, I discussed how this relationship creates two distinct roles and illustrated how these roles form points around which individuals may take up various subject positions. Individuals exploit the rights and obligations which characterize these roles in order to construct themselves as particular kinds of people with particular wants and needs. Then, I demonstrated how other social and linguistic resources serve a similar function by discussing both conversational maxims and contextualization cues. These resources allow for movement among different subject positions as they offer a continual index as to who one is and what one is doing over the course of an encounter. Furthermore, I argued that individuals are not free to align themselves with all of the subject positions available at a given moment in time. They are constrained by both their access to certain forms of knowledge/experience and their relationships to the other interlocutors present. Finally, I discussed how the same linguistic resource (pronouns) can function on multiple levels, thus allowing individuals to occupy several, simultaneously occurring subject positions.

My analysis of research interviews has suggested that a variety of social and linguistic resources are available for the construction of self representations. These self representations form the building blocks of social relationships. That is, they allow people to take up different subject positions with respect to one another. Freedom to manipulate linguistic and social resources, however, is constrained by a variety of forces. First, the rules of speaking for interviews limit what counts as valid/appropriate behavior in such situations. Individuals must have access to these rules in order to present themselves in a favorable fashion. Second, individual circumstances shape people's abilities to both recognize and appropriate these resources. Not everyone has access to the same set of resources and some resources are more valuable than others. Consequently, interviews become a site of struggle as people attempt to use the resources they have within the confines of a highly stylized context. Despite these limitations, how-

ever, individuals do manage to create multiple, complex, and dynamic representations of themselves. I would argue that as individuals move through life, they discover new ways to use social/linguistic resources and consequently discover new possibilities for self-hood.

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Anne Pomerantz is a doctoral student in Educational Linguistics in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. She also teaches Spanish at the university. Her research interests include second language learning and the relationship between language use and social identity.